

NEW LUCE CHURCH

In 1646 Parliament ratified the division of Glenluce parish into New Luce and Old Luce, which had been proposed by the heritors and parishioners of the parish in 1641, and approved the establishment of a Kirk at Balneil. It was to be called the New Kirk of Glenluce, but actually became known as the Moor Kirk of Luce. The minister's stipend was to be 620 merks (less than the 1000 merks allocated to the Old Luce minister), a manse was to be built and a glebe of equivalent size to that of Old Luce was to be provided by James Ross of Balneil.

The well-known covenanting preacher Alexander Peden was minister at New Luce from 1659 until he was outed along with many others in October 1662. When he preached his farewell sermon he is said to have occupied the pulpit till nightfall and, on leaving it, to



have knocked three times on the door with his Bible, saying, "I arrest thee in my Master's name, that none enter thee but such as come by the door, as I have done." None did enter and the charge was then vacant until 1694.

The original manse was noted in the Old Statistical Account of 1791 as ruinous but orders had been given for a new one to be built. When New Luce was linked to Old Luce under a single minister in 1969, the manse was sold and is now known as Lucewater House.

The present New Luce Church, a category B listed building, was erected on the site of the former church. According to G Hay in his 'Architecture of Scottish Post-Reformation Churches 1560 – 1843' (1957) p277, it was built in 1816, although the New Statistical Account, written by the minister who was in post at the disputed dates, gives the date of construction as about 1821. It could originally accommodate 400 people. The interior was recast in 1878. The Church was renovated and re-seated in 1965 by David Jardine of Stranraer. New Luce was linked with Old Luce on 10 March 1969, under the ministry of Old Luce. The church closed its doors for the last time as a place of worship in 2016.

New Luce Free Church

New Luce Free Church was formed as a preaching station of the Free Church of Scotland in 1862. A church was built in 1871, north of the junction of the Stranraer and Glenluce roads, but it never became a fully sanctioned charge. It became the United Free Church in 1900, and remained a mission station until 1930, when it united with the Church of Scotland charge of New Luce. The church was demolished around 1980 but the bellecote was donated to the community and now sits behind the terraced garden on the site of the Stair Arms Hotel.



1916 postcard Free Church top right

Reformed Presbyterian Chapel

The Rev William Symington, who served the Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Stranraer, also preached regularly in many of the villages and covenanting sites in the area, including a sermon at Linn's Tomb on Craigmoddie Fell in 1827. A small congregation developed in New Luce, linked to Stranraer, and continued to grow after Symington's departure, and in 1854 indicated that it was ready to accept a monthly preacher. At some point between 1848 and 1865 a small chapel, noted as a meeting house in the 1865 valuation rolls, was built to the north east of the Main Water bridge. (A United Presbyterian Church is mentioned in the 1855 valuation rolls, well before the Free Church was built – could the entry refer to the RP chapel and did the enumerator just get his denominations mixed up?) When the majority of the RP congregations joined the Free Church in 1876, Stranraer/New Luce held out and continued their separate existence. The meeting house is marked RP church on the 1893 map of the village but not on the 1908 map. For most of the 20th century the building housed the local shop.



1893 map showing the Free Church and Reformed Protestant Church

New Luce School

The Act inaugurating the Moor Kirk of Luce also provided for a schoolmaster for the new kirk. The New Statistical Account of 1839 referred to a school and a schoolmaster's house having been built 'lately'. This school was situated in the NW corner of the churchyard. The schoolmaster's house was probably the adjacent building. The schoolmaster at the time was Andrew McLean.



By 1851 Robert Lupton, later to become Session Clerk and a key figure in the village, was schoolmaster. Around 1864 a new school was built across the road to the south of the graveyard, and a new schoolhouse was also built adjoining the graveyard to the east. The old school probably became the beadle's cottage. The house which may have been the schoolmaster's no longer exists by 1893.



In the days when transport to school was mainly by foot there were also schools at Glenwhilly and Barnvannoch.